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ABSTRACT

This report examines 21 case studies of schools where leaders took proactive steps to improve relations among different racial/ethnic groups. Among the dilemmas they encountered were staff issues (differential treatment based on race) and student issues (the composition of ethnic clubs). Roots of racial/ethnic conflict included segregation, racism, socialization, and inequality. By taking a proactive stance and monitoring subtle tensions, the leaders avoided such conflict. Before school leaders can develop plans to improve racial/ethnic relations, they must consider their school's context and how it affects human relations. All 21 schools benefitted from at least some contextual supports that made the development of positive intergroup relations easier. The leaders had very different priorities depending on their contexts and needs they identified as most salient. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is useful for reflecting the progression that schools followed in their quest to develop students' fullest potential (meeting students' physical needs, ensuring student safety, and emphasizing the higher order needs of community and belonging, self-esteem, and achieving potential). This report describes how one urban elementary school built its community. It concludes by discussing how to communicate success in human relations. (Contains 12 references and 4 appendices: "Contextual Constraints," "Contextual Supports," "District Supports," and a "List of Schools in the Study.") (SM)

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HOW SCHOOL LEADERS CAN IMPROVE INTERETHNIC RELATIONS

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EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE REPORT 7

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CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON EDUCATION,
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Introduction: New Leaders and New Roles

> *People would like to see our race problem disappear. And the way they think it's going to disappear is by not talking about it. But the real way you make it disappear is by talking about it, learning about it, and understanding it, and then you'll see a change, not just by ignoring it. —a 12th-grade student*

Amid the changing demographics of many urban and suburban schools and the push for school reform, administrators, teachers, and other school staff often find themselves thrust, willingly or not, into new roles. Teachers may discover that participating in the new leadership team at their school offers an exciting opportunity for growth and the possibility of making a difference beyond the classroom. Principals may find that, in addition to managing the administrative functions of the school, forging a vision, guiding the process of school reform, and supervising staff, they spend a significant amount of time handling issues that come with the new territory of changing demographics. For example, they might take on responsibility for helping immigrant parents understand the U.S. school system or explaining to long-time community residents why they should welcome new residents of their community who do not look, behave, or speak like them. In some cases, they also become mediators of conflicts that have a racial or ethnic dimension, involving students, school staff, or parents. Most school leaders were not prepared for these roles in their administrative credential programs, yet they increasingly find that they need to acquire the necessary expertise somehow—usually by trial and error.

Contreras points out that training and development of leaders . . . has come to need refocusing to mediate the new diversity that is characteristic of our at-risk schools (1992, p. 160-161). Schools that do not respond carefully and effectively to the changing student population are indeed at risk in the sense that they stand to fail in their responsibility to provide a safe and respectful learning environment and a meaningful, challenging education for all their students. While in a larger sense, all of us are responsible for making sure that schools do not fail in these ways, no one is more acutely aware of this responsibility than those in school leadership roles. This includes principals and other administrators, of course, but it also includes many other individuals who take on leadership roles within a school; that can mean anyone from teachers and counselors to students, parents, and community members.

The Leading for Diversity Study

One of the more challenging areas that these school leaders may encounter is the delicate and emotion-laden issue of relations among different racial and ethnic groups. How can leaders effectively address racial or ethnic conflicts? On the more positive side, how can leaders create a foundation for safety and respect so that relationships among diverse groups and individuals can flourish? These are the questions that formed the heart of the Leading for Diversity study, a 3-year research project funded by CREDE and the Field Initiated Studies Program of the U.S. Department of Education. The study was conducted by researchers at ARC Associates, a non-profit organization in Oakland, California, which is dedicated to promoting educational excellence and equity for students of diverse backgrounds.

In order to learn what proactive school leaders do to create positive interethnic environments, we conducted case studies of 21 schools across the United States where the leadership had taken proactive steps to improve relations among the different groups (Henze, Katz, Norte, Sather, & Walker, 1999). Sites were selected through a nomination process in which we sought schools that met three criteria: (1) a diverse student population; (2) a history of racial or ethnic tensions in the school or

surrounding community; and (3) one or more leaders in the school who were proactive in improving racial or ethnic relations. What we have learned from this study is, in one sense, very simple: School leaders can, without a doubt, make a positive difference in interethnic relations. This message is a vital one to carry forward because schools, and the adults who operate them, are often blamed for everything that is wrong with the educational system. In particular, they are blamed for perpetuating inequalities that make racial tensions worse rather than better. While some of this blame is justified in some cases, it is important to keep in mind that individuals in leadership roles can do a great deal to create an environment for positive change.

How they create this positive environment is the subject of this publication. The 21 schools in the study offer a number of insights that may help principals and others in school leadership roles to put into practice the ideals of safety and respect in diverse schools.

It is worth taking a moment to consider what is meant by *race* and *ethnicity* since these terms are often used interchangeably. The term *race* is problematic. It has been used to describe physical differences of populations, which are then erroneously associated with mental capabilities that can be ranked. Traditional racial classifications include White, American Indian, Black, and Asian. Anthropologists have shown, however, that there are no distinct human races. In fact, there are more genetic differences within so-called races than there are between them (Montagu, 1997). Nonetheless, many people in the United States and other countries continue to behave as if there were separate, distinct races. For this reason, we can say that race is a concept that is socially constructed, even though it is not biologically valid.

Ethnicity is a less loaded term. It refers to a social group that shares a sense of group membership, culture, language, political and economic interests, history, and an ancestral geographical base (Wijeyesinghe, Griffin, & Love, 1997). Yup'ik Eskimos, Swedes, Haitians, Nubians, Basque, and Irish are all examples of ethnic groups. In this report, I will usually refer to race or ethnicity, in recognition of the fact that either or both of these social concepts may play a role in group relations in schools.

There are two reasons why these distinctions are important for school leaders to understand. First, if race and racism are socially constructed (not biologically determined), then people have the power to socially unconstruct them. In other words, we do not have to accept racial divisions and racism as givens. We can work to change other people's perceptions and misinformation, and school leaders stand in powerful positions from which to influence others. Second, understanding the distinctions among social terms such as race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, and so forth could potentially become part of the curriculum in all schools, providing an epistemological base from which students could learn about group relations. (For more information about anthropological research on race, see the American Anthropological Association Web site at www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm.)

Presenting Problems: Two Leadership Dilemmas Involving Race or Ethnicity

In the actual experiences of school leaders, insights about ethnic relations often arise in the context of dilemmas or problems. The following sections of this report focus on two dilemmas that are drawn from schools in the study.

1. A staff issue involving differential treatment based on race

David Murakawa[1] had been the principal at Greenlawn Elementary School for a short time when he realized with dismay that the school secretary, a European American woman, treated people differently depending on her perception of their ethnic background. She tended to interact warmly with European American parents, but was less friendly with members of minority groups, especially those who spoke little English. She would often act as if they weren't there until they tried to say something to her. Once they finally caught her attention, she could often be brusque, leaving an impression that they were a nuisance. Murakawa was especially concerned because she was the first person parents and visitors to the school encountered, and in that role she was largely responsible for people's first impressions of the school.

The school and the surrounding community had changed in recent years, from being largely middle class and white, to having more low-income children and more ethnic diversity, especially Asian, Pacific Islander, and African American. There was still some resentment of these changes in the community, manifested most disturbingly in the broadcasting of racist comments by police over the police radio.

Murakawa, a Japanese American who was raised in the community, had been hired by the district to play a key role in a new diversity initiative that the superintendent was undertaking. He knew that the school mirrored some of the simmering resentment against immigrants and African Americans that existed in the surrounding community, and he was concerned about the secretary's behavior, because her unequal treatment of parents and visitors had given her a reputation as a racist.

Picture yourself in Murakawa's role. There are several possible ways for a principal to address a situation like this. One way is to speak to the secretary and simply tell her that you have observed her treating people differently and that it seems to be based on her perception of their race or ethnicity. You will, of course, have to provide examples to back up your point. However, this scenario will most likely make her defensive—in general, people do not respond well to accusations of racism—and the changes in behavior that you are aiming for might be lost in the ensuing argument.

Another option is to ignore the problem for the time being and look for a way to move the secretary to a different position where she will have less contact with the public. Then you can bring in a secretary who is more sensitive to the diversity of the community. This option, while it may be needed down the line, jumps ahead to a resolution without exploring the possibility for individual change. Essentially, it assumes that the secretary is not capable of changing her behavior.

A third option is to use this as an opportunity to do some individualized staff development, supported by the belief that people *can* change their behavior if they see a positive reason to do so. This is in fact the course that Murakawa took, and it worked remarkably well. He waited until there was a convenient time when both he and the

[1] *Pseudonyms have been used for people and schools to protect the confidentiality of information shared.*

secretary would not be interrupted; then he met with her and explained a model of interaction that addressed what he saw as the essential problem in her relationships with the community—the issue of power. (See Table 1.)

Table 1 Dynamics of Power Relations

In this model, there are five basic assumptions:

1. Power, like energy, is neither good nor bad in and of itself, and it exists in some form in all people at all times.

2. Assymetrical power positions—that is, dominant and subordinate—always exist to greater and lesser extents in all relationships, but they are not static.

3. We each occupy either dominant or subordinate positions of power relative to different individuals and relative to context.

4. Inherent in being in the dominant position is that we are blind, to greater or lesser degrees, to the negative consequences of our power over others. In the subordinate position, on the other hand, we have insight into the negative consequences of the decisions and actions of those in the dominant role, because we are the ones who most feel their impact.

5. There are responsibilities that correspond to each position of power. Specifically, those in the subordinate position have a responsibility to give voice to how decisions and actions affect them, and those in the dominant position have a responsibility to listen and respond to those in the subordinate role. When we recognize and effectively act upon these responsibilities, a symbiotic relationship that is mutually beneficial can result.

Developed by Charles Vert Willie, 1987, and adapted by Edmundo Norte, 2000.

Murakawa explained that in his own role as a leader, he has to do a lot of listening and responding, because he doesn't always know the impact of his decisions and actions until he hears about it from the people who are affected. Similarly, the school secretary's role is a dominant one in relation to the community members who enter the school. In the eyes of visitors and parents, the secretary is the gatekeeper who holds the key to unlock the services and information the school can provide. She can turn them away without giving them the assistance they seek, or she can respond in a welcoming way and actively point them in the right direction to get what they came for. In the case of non-English-speaking parents, it is particularly important for the school secretary to locate someone who speaks their language to talk with them. Her responsibility in the dominant power position is to listen actively and respond to those in the subordinate position.

Several weeks after this meeting, Murakawa reported that the secretary's manner of interacting with diverse parents, as well as parents' perception of her, had improved markedly. She displayed more welcoming behavior when parents walked in, greeting them warmly and asking them how she could help them. If they did not understand English, she would politely gesture to them to sit down and wait while she tried to find someone who would translate.

While this was only one of many efforts this principal made to improve the school's relations with parents and the community, it illustrates several important points.

First, many people make the assumption that racial or ethnic conflicts are primarily a problem among students. But as this scene indicates, adults, as much or perhaps more than students, also need to improve their cross-cultural communication skills.

Second, Murakawa realized that a direct confrontation about the secretary's racial attitudes would probably only make her defensive, and he would not be able to accomplish his goal of making the front office a more welcoming place. He knew that if he were to have any hope of influencing her behavior, he had to approach the problem in a positive way. By recognizing her power in the front office and sharing the model with her, he created a context that enabled her to listen to and use his suggestions.

2. A student issue involving the composition of ethnic clubs

Rancho Verde High School, like many large urban schools with diverse populations, had many after-school clubs that were organized along ethnic lines. There was a Filipino American club, an African American club, a Latinos Unidos club, an East Indian/Pakistani club, and others. While these were not the only after-school clubs (others were organized around special interests such as forensics, chess, computers, etc.), they did represent a desire on the part of students to have affinity groups based on shared cultural and ethnic roots.

Ana, a student we interviewed, shared the following incident:

My junior year, I was at this one meeting [of the Filipino American Club], and some girl said something to me like, 'You're not full Filipino. You really shouldn't be here.' And I was all, 'I belong here as much as you do.' But I still felt uncomfortable and I didn't go back. I was just like, whatever.

This incident never came to the attention of the principal or any other adult at the school. Not surprisingly, hundreds of things go on at a school daily that never reach the attention of any responsible adult. Perhaps because racial issues are known to be volatile, both students and adults tend to keep them quiet or only share them with their friends. Whatever, in teenage terms, is a way of saying, I'm not going to fight this one. I'll just let it go.

But let's suppose, for a moment, that the incident did reach an adult who could do something about it. This could be the principal or any other staff member who chose to take a leadership role. Suppose you are that person. What, if anything, could you do?

One possibility is to meet with the club leader and tell him or her that Ana must be allowed to join. Most schools with ethnic clubs have policies that anyone can join, but the reality is that these clubs do not tend to be very heterogeneous. By citing school policy, you might gain Ana a reluctant acceptance to the club, but this does not provide a learning experience for any of the participants. It is a bandaid approach that barely covers the wound. Furthermore, it does not lead to any responsible decision making on the part of students, because the adults and the school policy retain all the authority.

Another possibility is to focus on assuaging Ana's feelings, explaining to her that while the other girl said something very hurtful, she probably didn't understand how it would affect Ana. While this might be helpful to Ana, it does nothing to prevent similar acts of unkindness and intolerance from occurring in the future.

A third possibility is to meet with the whole club and have a discussion about what the club is for, how it can accomplish its goals, and why it might be important to have an open policy about who can join. For instance, students can be asked, What would happen if someone who is not Filipino at all, but is very interested in learning about the culture, wanted to join? Students can also be asked to share what they know about their own ethnic heritage. Most students, if they have access to information about their family, will realize that their ancestors come from many different ethnic backgrounds.

In our increasingly complex and inter-related world, the myth of ethnic purity is, in most cases, just that—a myth. Through a process like this, students can take ownership of the decision themselves. The adult provides the scaffolding by raising certain kinds of questions to consider in making the decision. This approach clearly has an educational component.

A fourth possibility is to rethink the value of having after-school clubs with an ethnic focus. Some argue that such clubs lead to balkanization of the student body. Others say they are important, especially for students who are members of minority groups, because they provide a safe place where students of similar backgrounds can share their culture, help each other, and feel positive about their own ethnic identity. Creating a school policy that outwardly emphasizes unity by discouraging ethnic clubs can have a dampening effect on students' self-esteem. In many schools, ethnic clubs and ethnic assemblies are the only places where the culture of minority students is recognized and given a central place. Such clubs also provide an opportunity for students of many diverse backgrounds to assume leadership roles, such as club president or treasurer.

Tatum (2001), who has written extensively about the development of racial or ethnic identity, identifies three processes that are needed to create effective learning environments:

1. affirming identity
2. building community
3. cultivating student leadership

Schools that focus primarily on affirming identity and fail to provide structures that also build community may indeed become balkanized. But removing opportunities to affirm identity—such as those presented by ethnic clubs—is usually ill advised. Proactive school leaders tend to integrate all three processes in the life of the school community.

A fifth possibility is to use this incident as a springboard to a school-wide educational effort, which could take place in classes such as social studies, English, or science. This approach is more long term; it may take several years to rally the kinds of support that are needed to create and sustain curricular innovations. A number of schools in the study had developed ways to integrate ethnic and multicultural studies in coursework. At the high school level, several schools required students to take classes in which they studied their own ethnic heritage as well as the history and cultures of other students. These courses also addressed difficult issues of intergroup relations. Students who had taken these classes felt they were very beneficial. One African American girl stated,

> *They [other students] hear us calling each other nigger this and nigger that like it's just a pastime, and they think, Oh, new word, new slang word. Rather than knowing the history and understanding. That's why I think education is important because people really don't understand. Even people within the African American culture don't fully understand, or if they do understand they brush it aside, like that was then and this is now. And it's not.*

Going Deeper: Understanding the Causes of Racial or Ethnic Conflict

The two vignettes that have been presented here are similar to the symptoms a medical doctor is faced with every day. A proactive school leader, like a medical practitioner, needs to understand that there are causes and mitigating circumstances that can bring symptoms to the surface. While some of these causes are well

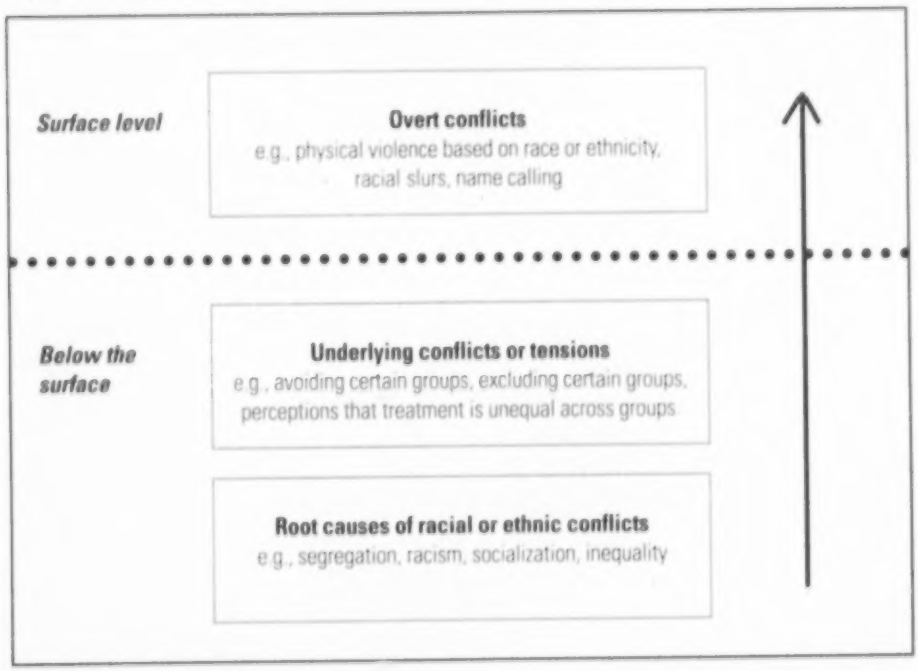
understood, others are still the subject of exploration. And, as in the medical world, there are alternative views of how the symptoms should be addressed. Western medicine is often seen as overly focused on symptoms and parts of the body; Chinese medicine, on the other hand, is said to focus more on underlying conditions and a holistic view of the human being, including physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects. I do not wish to belabor the medical metaphor, but to suggest that it can be helpful to think about issues of racial conflict with this comparison in mind.

In our study of proactive leadership in ethnic relations, a model has emerged that can help educators understand the progression of racial or ethnic conflict (see Figure 1). Overt conflict, such as physical fighting or the use of racial slurs, lies on the surface, like the top of an iceberg. Underlying, latent, or potential conflicts or tensions are in the middle. These underlying conflicts or tensions may not involve the awareness of those involved, and they may remain hidden indefinitely or surface later as overt conflicts. Beneath both of these layers are the root causes of racial or ethnic conflict, which include the following:

- segregation, which allows for the development and maintenance of stereotypes about other groups with whom one has little actual contact.
- racism, which can be both individual and institutional.
- socialization in which parents and other adults consciously or unconsciously transmit to children negative information about other groups.
- inequality, in which power, status, or access to desired goods and services are unequally distributed among groups.

(Kreisberg, 1998, pp. 40-44)

Figure 1 Progression of Racial or Ethnic Conflict


Surface level
Overt conflicts
e.g., physical violence based on race or ethnicity, racial slurs, name calling
Below the surface
Underlying conflicts or tensions
e.g., avoiding certain groups, excluding certain groups, perceptions that treatment is unequal across groups
Root causes of racial or ethnic conflicts
e.g., segregation, racism, socialization, inequality

In the two scenes described earlier, it was clear that neither had erupted into an overt conflict that involved the whole school. The scene involving the principal and secretary at Greenlawn can be viewed as an example of underlying conflict or tension, because the secretary was exhibiting unequal treatment toward different groups. We do not know if the parents were aware of this, or if some simply felt less comfortable coming to the school. In the scene involving Ana and the Filipino American club, the conflict was somewhat more overt, but it still rested primarily in an act of exclusion, not violence or the use of a racial slur. If Ana had pursued her position further, rather than retreating, it could have become an overt conflict.

Most of us have been conditioned to work from the assumption that overt problems are the ones that need fixing. If it ain't broke, don't fix it is a piece of folk advice that serves well under many circumstances. However, when school leaders use this as their model for responding to racial issues, it places them in a reactive role, responding to crises. As one teacher noted, If you have a principal who's putting out fires all the time, that's not going to lead to a vision. You can prevent the fires by having a vision.

Although the school leader had no knowledge of the incident between Ana and the Filipino club, in general, leaders in the study took a proactive stance rather than a reactive one, recognizing overt conflicts as a symptom and underlying tensions and root causes as the illness. By staying tuned to the more subtle tensions that may be related to race or ethnicity, these leaders were able to identify problems more accurately and to develop activities and structures to build a stronger interethnic community.

They also understood conflict as a normal part of human social interaction, rather than as a destructive scourge to be eradicated altogether. Conflict need not result in violent or destructive outcomes; it can in fact become an opportunity for learning. Michael Fullan, a renowned expert on school change, points out that conflict, if respected, is positively associated with creative breakthroughs under complex, turbulent conditions (1999, p. 22). School leaders can play a key role in turning conflicts into opportunities for learning, as suggested in the scenes described earlier.

Assessing the School Context and Its Effect on Interethnic Relations

Before school leaders can develop a plan for the improvement of racial or ethnic relations, they need to consider their particular school's context and the way it affects human relations in general and racial or ethnic relations in particular. Each school leader steps into a different context and history that may have laid important groundwork for positive interethnic relations, created barriers that impede relationship building, or, more likely, some combination of these possibilities. Some schools and their leaders, because of pre-existing contexts, face more barriers and rely on fewer contextual supports in their quest to promote positive interethnic relations. For example, some schools have built-in segregated groupings of students that, intentionally or not, are organized along ethnic lines. Many schools are partially or entirely tracked, and the lower tracks tend to be heavily populated by African American and Latino students, while the higher tracks are more white and Asian. Grouping practices such as these are not easy to change, and usually such changes take time and involve many layers of decision making. A school leader who wants to promote positive interethnic relations in this context has to think of long-term plans (which might include moving to an untracked system) and short-term plans, which might focus on developing structures to bring students together outside of class time.

In some schools, the physical site tends to keep people separate because of the way buildings are laid out. In such cases, compensating structures need to be developed to encourage collaboration and informal sharing among staff and students. In other schools, a portion of the student body comes from outside the immediate community (because of required bussing or because some students receive waivers to attend outside their local district). This can create a separation between neighborhood students and commuters, affecting after-school activities, parent involvement, and other functions of the school. When this separation overlaps with ethnic differences, it can make it difficult for the school to create opportunities for diverse students and parents to get to know one another.

On the other hand, all schools in the study benefited from at least some contextual supports that made the development of positive intergroup relations more likely. For example, several schools benefited from a physical layout that made relationship building happen naturally. Schools that were designed in pod fashion with a center and several radiating wings, as opposed to separate buildings or linear structures with long halls, enabled people to interact when they met in the center on their way to and from different wings. Teachers who shared the same wing could easily have conversations with one another during breaks while still keeping an eye on students. In addition, well maintained, attractive schools made staff, parents, and students alike feel valued.

Some schools have strong district supports that, directly or indirectly, affect human relations in the schools. For example, one district had a policy of providing one and a half hours of weekly collaboration time for all teachers. At the high school, teachers formed their own collaboration groups, one of which was called the Multicultural Collaboration Group. Over time, these teachers became leading forces in developing a number of initiatives to embed multicultural education in the curriculum and to improve interethnic relations across the campus. In addition to this particular group, the collaboration groups in general helped break down departmental fiefdoms and create a more positive environment for teachers. Sometimes, support structures like this one have only an indirect effect on interethnic relations. The teacher collaboration time didn't directly improve relations among diverse groups, but it created conditions that were favorable, leading to other activities that did have a direct impact on interethnic relations.

Appendices A through C are intended as tools to help school leaders think about constraints and supports that exist in their own school context. The constraints and supports listed in the appendices are drawn from the study's 21 schools; they are not intended to be a complete listing of all possible constraints and supports. School leaders are encouraged to go beyond what is listed here and add their own particular items.

To use these forms as part of a collaborative planning process, educators at one school could fill out the tables individually, then compare and discuss their assessments. They will almost certainly have some similar views and some differing views about how the context of their school supports or constrains positive interethnic relations. Discussing how and why views differ and how they are the same can help clarify issues and provide insight into how and why perspectives differ. A teacher, for example, might have a very different view of human relations than a counselor or an administrator. Professional roles, as well as personal, cultural, and social backgrounds, can all influence what we perceive in the school and how we perceive it.

In discussing the above elements of context, educators may find that the same things that constrain positive interethnic relations also hinder other types of relationship building across lines of difference. Similarly, the supports listed above can provide a

strong foundation for improving relationships across lines of gender, religion, economic class, sexual orientation, and other sources of diversity.

Ultimately, assessing the school context should help educators develop a clearer picture of how rough or smooth the road ahead might be. Schools that have many contextual constraints and few supports may have more difficulty initiating and carrying out changes; they might have to start with more modest proposals for change, yet still keep long-term goals in view. Schools with many supports and few constraints, on the other hand, may be able to move more quickly toward reaching their goals, building on a foundation that is already strong.

Setting Priorities for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations

The school leaders in the study had set very different priorities depending on their contexts and the kinds of needs they had identified as most salient. Some schools face serious problems of safety and security in which students or staff feel physically or verbally threatened. A first step in these schools is to contain overt conflict so that students and staff can, at the very least, come to school and feel safe. These schools must not, however, stop with containment, but plan ahead to build a more positive environment. Other schools have either never had a high degree of overt conflict, or such problems were addressed a long time ago. These schools, because they are already safe and secure, can focus on other efforts such as creating a sense of community, celebrating and learning about different ethnic groups and cultures, and making sure every student is encouraged to reach his or her potential. All schools should reach this point eventually, but the context and needs of a particular school may mean that it will take a longer time to get there.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1968), developed as a way to explain the development of individuals toward reaching their fullest potential, is a useful tool that our research team adapted to reflect the progression we saw schools following in their quest to develop students' fullest potential. This progression is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 A Progression of Needs

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Need for Social Connection</td><td>Need for Self-Actualization</td><td rowspan="2">Level 3</td></tr>
<tr><td>3a. Need for a sense of community and belonging</td><td>3b. Need for self-esteem & esteem by and of others</td><td>3c. Need to reach full potential</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Basic Needs</td><td colspan="2">2. Need for safety and security</td><td>Level 2</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">1. Physical needs</td><td>Level 1</td></tr>
</table>

Level 1

A school at Level 1 in this progression would place priority on meeting the physical needs of students, including the needs for food, shelter, clothing, and transportation to and from school. While many schools provide free lunch, transportation, and other physical services, this area is not the main emphasis of most schools.

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Level 2

A school at Level 2 would place priority on ensuring that students are safe from violence and verbal threats, and that they feel secure coming to school. Several schools in our study found it necessary to focus on this level, because violence and security problems had so destabilized the school that nothing much could be accomplished until this level was under control. Some of the strategies schools were using to address this area included establishing stricter and more consistent behavioral standards; placing security personnel at key points, including exits and entrances; improving the training of security personnel; and closing the campus so that students could not leave at lunchtime. Proactive school leaders, however, try to couple such strategies with positive rewards and incentives, so that efforts to establish safety and security are not seen as punitive. Thus, for example, a principal in a middle school who established much stricter and more consistent behavioral standards tied this to the creation of more positive activities for students to become involved with at lunchtime and after school.

Level 3

A school at Level 3 has typically established an environment where students' physical needs are being met and where students and staff feel safe and secure from violence and verbal threats. While a proactive leader never entirely stops attending to these issues, they are no longer (or never were) the central focus of the school's efforts. At this level, a school can turn its focus to one or more of the three areas that Maslow called higher order needs. These include the need for a sense of community and belonging; the need for self-esteem and esteem by and of others; and the need to reach one's fullest potential.

Community and Belonging

One can think of community and belonging as the unity part of improving race relations, while self-esteem and esteem for and by others is the pluralism part. Schools that are focusing on community and belonging might, for example, work on building a diverse leadership team that includes different ethnic groups and different stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents, and instructional assistants. Providing structures such as houses, families, or teams, where personalized relationships can develop, would be another example of a focus on community and belonging. These approaches tend to highlight similarities among people and the sharing of similar goals, such as student achievement, safety, and respect.

Esteem

A focus on self-esteem and esteem for and by others might be exemplified in a school where students have opportunities to study and appreciate their own history and culture as well as those of others. Curriculum and special courses are one way to do this; celebratory events are another, though these have a tendency to be more superficial. Professional development for staff in the area of diversity and race relations can also help toward the goals of self-esteem and esteem for others. These approaches tend to highlight differences and to point out that these differences are valuable resources.

Achieving Potential

A focus on each individual reaching their highest potential is almost synonymous with the ideal of education—that it should help people expand and deepen their talents and skills, preparing them to reach their goals and to make a difference in some area, whether it be academics, arts, or social justice. At one elementary school in the study, this focus was exemplified by the sixth graders, who all worked on a year-long project to solve community problems of their choice, and presented their projects to an outside audience. This focus on reaching potential includes the traditional focus of schools on academic achievement, but it also encompasses other forms of achievement.

As one principal in the study commented, it is the nature of school leadership that everybody's thing is the most important thing you should be doing. Because school leaders have so many different constituencies to serve and so many potential areas for action, developing clarity about where to focus one's energies is a must. A few well chosen focus areas, selected in collaboration with key stakeholders in the school community, can link the school leaders' work to the areas where the school has the greatest needs, making the leaders' efforts highly relevant. Leaders may wish to use the progression of needs described in this section (Figure 2), like the context assessments in the previous section, as a tool for reflection and planning among administrators, staff, students, and parents. If a consensus can be reached as to the level of need that is most salient at the school, the leadership team can move forward to develop a plan that addresses those needs.

Developing a Coherent Plan to Improve Interethnic Relations

Having assessed pre-existing contextual constraints and supports and having identified the priority needs that are most salient at the school, leaders are in a position to create a plan to improve interethnic relations.

Table 2 displays the array of different approaches documented in the 21 schools that participated in the study. These approaches, when combined in meaningful clusters, helped make the borders between ethnic groups more permeable and understandable, and thus more easily crossed by young people and adults alike.

It might be tempting to view this list as yet another cookbook style set of prescriptions—that is, pick any three of these approaches and implement them, and you will have a harmonious school where everyone gets along. However, as most leaders realize, the reality of school change is far more complex.

Rainbow Elementary School provides a good example of how a particular leader at a particular school developed a plan to improve interethnic relations.

Building Community at Rainbow Elementary

Rainbow is a small, urban elementary school in the San Francisco Bay Area, with a student population that is 40% African American, 30% Latino, and 30% White. Nearly 80% of the students are from low-income households. Two years prior to participation in our study, the school was in disarray and rife with conflict. Student-to-student conflicts were a daily occurrence, and kicking, fighting, and swearing at recess were the norm. In talking about this era, the current principal characterized the situation as a breakdown in the management of child play and conflict. Although Rainbow is an elementary school, staff did not feel safe. As one teacher noted,

> *There was a fair degree of violence, bullying, aggression towards teachers, a very minimal amount of support from families and community. Teachers were basically feeling like they needed to move on for their health and well being.*

Conflicts between parents and staff were also endemic, fueled by feelings of mutual distrust and disrespect. Not surprisingly, given a context that was rampant with tensions and conflicts, the school showed very low academic performance as evidenced by scores on district exams. While low test scores are one kind of information that can define the needs of a school, it was not the lack of academic achievement that defined the most salient need of the Rainbow community during this period. It was clearly the need for safety and security that was most dominant in that context.

Table 2 Approaches for Improving Interethnic Relations

Approaches that involve all members of the school community

- *Data Inquiry:* These approaches examine data, especially disaggregated achievement results, as a starting point leading to various kinds of change.
- *School or District Vision:* These approaches use the school vision as a lever to keep goals such as social justice, unity, and respect in view.
- *Organizational:* These approaches change physical or organizational structures in ways that encourage relationships across lines of difference.
- *Diverse Staffing:* These approaches increase the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the staff as a path toward greater inclusion.
- *Professional Development:* These approaches seek to educate staff about interethnic relations.

Approaches designed to have a direct impact on students

- *Curricular and Pedagogical:* These approaches embed interethnic relations topics in curriculum or use instructional methods that encourage interethnic cooperation.
- *Special Events:* These approaches provide special times to celebrate the diverse cultures of the school, build awareness of differences and similarities, or focus on intergroup relations.
- *Programmatic:* These approaches include conflict resolution, mentoring and tutoring, and after-school and extracurricular programs.
- *Behavioral Standards:* These approaches focus on developing consistent standards of behavior across all diverse groups of students.

Approaches designed to reach extended audiences

- *Parent Involvement:* These approaches develop meaningful connections between diverse parents and schools.
- *Expanding School Community:* These approaches link the school with local, national, or international communities.
- *Leveraging Resources:* These approaches garner additional resources for the school's efforts to improve interethnic relations.

Fortunately, the district recognized that this was the case, and in the 1995-1996 school year brought in a new principal to restore order. This principal was characterized as an ex-Marine, or a Green Beret. With the support of the district, which renamed the school and designated it a civil rights academy—part of the district-wide civil rights initiative—the principal took on the very tough challenges at the school by, as one staff member described it, securing the perimeter and cleaning house. When the school's name changed, so did most of the staff. Faculty had to reapply to teach at the school,

and the result was that 8 of the 11 teachers at the school for the 1996-97 year were new. When the interim principal interviewed and selected the new teachers, two of his criteria were that they had to be team players and not object to the new name of the school (named after a gay civil rights leader). In commenting on what had happened to make things different at Rainbow, one teacher described how this principal created change:

> *[He] seemed to be extremely good at choosing staff members. He had an eye for people who were very empathetic and involved and had a degree of skill, even though they were new in dealing with all sorts of kids . . . [these] teachers had been changing the atmosphere in classrooms one by one. And in that sense he was effective.*

After the principal described above had spent a year sweeping through with these changes and made major headway in meeting the need for safety and security, the next principal at Rainbow, Mariah Ellis, came in and was able to begin the process of building community at the school. Ms. Ellis initiated several approaches aimed at building a sense of community, and increasing self-esteem and esteem of and by others. Academic achievement, as one dimension of self-actualization, was a constant, but not dominant priority at that time.

To build community and a sense of belonging among students, she created families—cross-grade-level groupings of students that met weekly with an adult. She also instituted regular whole-school assemblies to bring students together so they had opportunities to see each other, interact harmoniously, and develop a sense of familiarity with each other. She encouraged teachers to use cooperative group structures and integrate Tribes into the curriculum. Tribes is a democratic group process designed to promote a sense of community (Gibbs, 1995). She also organized special events such as peace assemblies and women's career day to address all students, and she started a conflict resolution program.

Given the history of racial tensions between parents and staff, it was also critical to build community and a sense of belonging with parents. Ms. Ellis began to work actively to reach out to parents by developing a multi-ethnic parent club, organizing family nights focused on specific curricular areas, and creating a Spanish-speaking parents group to help those who did not yet feel comfortable in English feel a part of the school. Parents were also invited to come during the day to talk with students, help out in classrooms, and plan fieldtrips. Because of the bussing situation in the district, many of the African American parents lived far away from the school, and transportation was always a problem. The principal made sure that whenever parents were invited to the school, transportation for parents was available if needed.

Ms. Ellis also knew it was important for the community surrounding the school to feel a sense of responsibility and connection to the school. She personally approached many of the merchants in the neighborhood, asking for donations when appropriate or simply striking up conversations so they could get to know the school and each other better.

To focus on self-esteem and esteem of and by others, Ms. Ellis introduced teachers to a new standards-driven curriculum called Different Ways of Knowing, which highlights multiple intelligences (Galef Institute, 1989). All teachers were trained in this curriculum. She also introduced Beyond Our Walls, a cross-cultural collaboration project with a Northern California Indian tribe. The conflict resolution program, in addition to reducing violence and building a sense of community, also builds communication skills and self-esteem among the students who are conflict managers. The principal also

sought to retain and hire more teachers and paraprofessionals who reflect the student population and who could serve as role models and links to the community.

As a result of the efforts described above, the school improved significantly in several ways: Students and staff, as a result of curricular and professional development efforts, became more aware and appreciative of the diverse cultures of the school; student conflict and violence, including interethnic conflict, dropped dramatically; parent involvement across different ethnic groups increased as parents reported feeling more welcome at the school; merchants in the community, as a result of the principal's efforts to build connections with them, were more aware of the school and more welcoming toward staff and students.

What Can Be Learned From Rainbow Elementary?

The plan for improving interethnic relations in the school should fit the most salient needs.
Ms. Ellis had the opportunity to focus on addressing the need for community, belonging, and self-esteem because the previous principal had already spent the previous year satisfying the need for safety and security. Had the new principal attempted to institute her community, belonging, and self-esteem building approaches without the need for basic safety and security having been addressed, it is likely that her efforts would not have been successful.

In selecting approaches to improve interethnic relations, leaders should make sure that the approaches cluster together to embody coherent, meaningful themes.
As the description of Rainbow suggests, it took a lot more than one or two approaches to make a difference. No single approach is adequate by itself, nor is it advisable for leaders to select a few approaches and implement them without thinking carefully about coherence. Doing so can create a hodgepodge effect of disparate approaches that fail to link to one another or any larger vision. Instead, Ms. Ellis, like other leaders in the study, found approaches that worked in concert to embody themes such as community building, personalization, respect for self and others, and nonviolence.

Communicating Success in Human Relations

In the United States, school success is defined quite narrowly as achievement levels on standardized tests. This is even more true now than in past decades, due to the increased emphasis on standards and accountability. Yet in every school in the study, there were other successes, including improvements in interethnic relations among students; a drop in the level of conflict and violence; increased involvement of diverse parents; increased staff collaboration; more diverse student leadership; enhanced reputation of the school in the community; and improved school climate. Some schools in the study, especially those that had safety and security issues well under control, also showed gains in academic achievement, but many had not yet arrived at the point where students were showing these gains. They were still building the foundation of safety and security and creating an environment where students could focus on learning. It is interesting to note that several schools that did not show academic gains during the time of the study have since reported to the authors that their standardized test scores have gone up, suggesting that the approaches put into place during the time of the study take two or more years to bear fruit in terms of academic gains.

Several leaders in the study excelled at communicating the successes of the school to its teachers, students, and community. This included communicating improvements in the non-academic areas mentioned above. Unfortunately, because most of our efforts

toward monitoring school improvement focus on academic achievement, most schools are poorly equipped to measure improvements in human relations. They do not have the staff expertise or systems in place to gather data that would demonstrate improvements from year to year. For example, many categories of disciplinary referrals, such as the term *defiant* in one school, are very subjective and do not lend themselves to valid monitoring of patterns even within the same school. In addition, students told us that many racial conflicts are never reported to any school authority.

An even greater issue in measuring success in human relations is the need to define the phenomenon to be measured. If a reduction in racial conflict is the only goal, then behavioral indicators such as a reduction in fights, suspensions, and so forth, would suffice—assuming they could be consistently monitored. However, most leaders in the study were doing much more than reducing racial conflict. They used a multitude of approaches that were designed to build more harmonious relations and to address the root causes of racial or ethnic conflict. The impact of such approaches, if they were working, would not be captured by a single measure of decrease in racial conflict. Rather, they would be reflected in other indicators of a more positive school environment, such as less rigid segregation among student groups, more collaboration among faculty, and a better reputation of the school in the community. Ultimately, these approaches should also contribute to higher academic achievement as well.

Since educational policy at this time does not require school leaders to measure their schools' progress in human relations, those who consider this an important area of school functioning have to figure out ways to demonstrate their successes. There are a number of relatively simple ways to do this. Reductions in suspensions and expulsions can be monitored, and these data should be disaggregated to show whether some ethnic groups are receiving disproportionately more suspensions and expulsions. Schools can document changes from year to year in the diversity of student leadership, for example, participation in the student council, conflict management, after-school club leadership, and so forth. Similarly, shifts in the diversity of parent involvement can be monitored on simple record-keeping sheets and analyzed at the end of each year. Student and staff surveys that measure school climate, which are often required by the district in any event, can include items that ask how many racial fights students have witnessed or been involved in, and how often students use or hear racial slurs during a typical week. Qualitative accounts of changes can also be turned into useful data showing perceptions and trends. For instance, one principal told us that one way she knew the school climate had improved was that substitute teachers told her they liked coming to the school now, whereas previously they had avoided it. If teachers receive professional development that focuses on human relations, then changes in their instructional style or curriculum can be documented through classroom observations and through interviews with teachers and their students.

When there is good news—that is, when efforts to improve human relations have paid off in some tangible way—school leaders need to share this with the rest of the community. Teachers in schools where this was a common practice reported that they had high morale and felt their efforts were recognized by the leadership. They also said that knowing they had made a difference, even a small one, made them want to work even harder to make more of a difference.

Conclusion

If schools are to become more like the ones in the study—that is, safe and respectful environments where positive interethnic relations can flourish—school leaders need to decide that intergroup relations are a priority area in education and take actions appropriate to their role. The actions identified below summarize content that was presented in this publication, as well as a few other areas not covered in this report.

1. Identify the contextual barriers and supports that have an impact on interethnic relations at the school.

2. Assess the nature of conflicts that occur in the school, including overt racial conflicts and underlying tensions and root causes of these tensions. Include adult as well as student conflicts, and identify the key issues that trigger conflicts and tensions.

3. Based on this assessment of conflict, identify the school's priority needs for the current year—for example, creating a safe and secure environment, developing a sense of community and belonging, developing self-esteem and esteem of others, developing the students' fullest potential.

4. Develop a vision for diversity in the school that is not merely a motto or statement, but a set of practices that take place daily in the school.

5. Involve diverse stakeholders in the development of this vision so that it becomes everyone's vision, not the principal's vision.

6. Identify your own preferred leadership style and communicate this to staff so that staff can more easily understand the role they need to adopt in working with administrators.

7. Seek out diverse perspectives on issues that affect the whole school, and listen actively even when you hear views with which you disagree.

8. Create an environment where people can openly and safely discuss topics and issues related to race and ethnicity.

9. Decide how the leadership will contribute to the development of positive interethnic relations at the school. Remember that underlying structures, such as shared decision making or the institution of regular collaboration time for teachers, often contribute indirectly to more positive interethnic relations.

10. Encourage others to step up and take leadership roles in interethnic relations, and provide the supports they need to make their efforts fruitful.

11. Develop a plan for how the school will address racial or ethnic conflict and develop positive interethnic relations in the future. Include approaches designed to react to existing conflicts and others designed to proactively build a positive interethnic environment. The approaches should be tied to the school vision through meaningful clusters—for example, approaches designed to build community, to personalize the school experience, to promote non-violence, and so forth.

12. Create a system that will allow the school's progress in human relations to be measured.

13. Communicate successes in human relations to the school community.

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Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 2000. Vol. 6(1). pp. 133-155.
Journal of Negro Education, 2001. Vol. 68(4). Special Focus: Leading for Diversity.
Principal Leadership, December 2000.
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Appendix A

Contextual Constraints That Can Inhibit Positive Interethnic Relations

Contextual Constraints	*Check if you see this as a constraint at your school*
It is difficult to recruit diverse staff.	
Students are segregated due to de facto tracking, grouping by language, etc.	
Large size of school leads to less personalized environment.	
School is in a low income community with high crime, gang presence.	
Some students come from communities outside the neighborhood.	
There is longstanding divisiveness among staff.	
Community has negative perceptions of the school.	
School has a problematic relationship with the district.	
School's physical layout is not conducive to relationship building.	
School buildings are in poor physical condition.	
School has low per pupil funding.	
School population is rapidly expanding.	
Previous leaders have left a legacy of mistrust and divisiveness in the school.	
The mobility rate of students and/or staff is high.	
New pressures from state (e.g., graduation standards, new testing program) divert attention away from human relations efforts.	
Students spend only two years at school.	
There is strong parental pressure against change.	
Union constrains principal in making changes.	
Student population has wide economic disparity.	
Many staff are new to teaching.	
Small size of school makes it difficult to offer a wide range of program options.	

Appendix B

Contextual Supports That Can Encourage Positive Interethnic Relations

Contextual Supports	*Check if you see this as a support at your school*
Additional funding is available for human relations efforts.	
Per pupil funding level is high.	
School staff is ethnically diverse and there are staff who are culturally similar to students.	
Physical layout is condusive to a sense of community.	
The facility is attractive and well maintained.	
District provides supports of various kinds (see Appendix C).	
School has pre-existing collaborations with outside agencies and/or local universities.	
Small size of school leads to greater personalization.	
Supportive community takes pride in school/district.	
Community is relatively homogeneous in income level.	
Previous school leaders have put into place structures that support positive interethnic relations.	
School participates in reform effort with a focus on equity, diversity, community building.	
State requires a foreign language for graduation.	
The community has a low crime rate.	
Other supports:	

Appendix C

District Supports That Can Encourage Positive Interethnic Relations

District Supports	*Check if you see this as a support in your district*
District leadership has strong agenda supporting diversity, equity, community building.	
Positive district leadership has been in place for a long time.	
District drawing areas ensure that school population reflects diversity of the district.	
District provides paid time for teachers to collaborate regularly for curriculum development and other school efforts.	
District has high standards, good reputation in state.	
District sets clear behavioral standards and supports schools in upholding them.	
Name of school reflects social justice focus.	
District provides transition time for incoming principals to get to know the school while previous principal is still there.	
Other district supports:	

Appendix D

Schools to Contact for Further Information

Many of the schools in this study have given permission for us to disseminate their names to other educators interested in learning from their efforts. Below is a list of schools whose leaders are willing to be contacted. The principals listed are those who were current as of September 2000. Principals who were there during the study are indicated with an asterisk.

Elementary Schools

Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy, San Francisco, CA
220 students, Grades K-5
Principal: Ms. Sandra Leigh*
(415) 241-6276
Website: www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schwww/sch505

Atkinson Elementary, Portland, OR
520 students, Grades K-5
Principal: Mr. John Withers*
(503) 916-6333
Website: www.pps.k12.or.us/schools/profiles/?location_id=234

Roan Street School, Dalton, GA
725 students, Grades PreK-2
Principal: Dr. Frankie Beard*
(706) 226-3225
Website: www.dalton.k12.ga.us/ro

Middle Schools

Martin Luther King Middle School, Berkeley, CA
840 students, Grades 6-8
Principal: Mr. Neil Smith*
(510) 644-6280
Website: www.berkeley.k12.ca.us/schools/kingms

César Chávez Middle School, Union City, CA
1400 students, Grades 7-9
Principal: Ms. Mireya Cásarez*
(510) 487-1700
Website: www.nhusd.k12.ca.us/chavez

Clark Middle School, Anchorage, AK
874 students, Grades 7-8
Principal: Ms. Sheri Stears*
(907) 277-4581
Website: www.asd.k12.ak.us/schools/clark

Appendix D (continued)

Warner Middle School, Westminster, CA
850 students, Grades 6-8
Principal: Ms. Linda Paulson*
(714) 894-7281
Website: www.wsd.k12.ca.us/warner

Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program, Providence, RI
125 students, Grades 7-8
Principal: Mr. Rob deBlois*
(401) 272-0881
Website: www.ri.net/Rinet/UCAP

High Schools
Evanston Township High School, Evanston, IL
2900 students, Grades 9-12
Principal and Superintendent: Dr. Alan Alston *
(847) 424-7000
Website: www.eths.k12.il.us

DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx, NY
4300 students, Grades 9-12
Principal: Ms. Geraldine Ambrosio
(718) 543-1000
Website: www.dwchs.com

Western High School, Anaheim, CA
1550 students, Grades 9-12
Principal: Mr. Doug Munsey
(714) 220-4040
Website: www.auhsd.k12.ca.us

Fenway High School, Boston, MA
255 students, Grades 9-12
Director: Mr. Larry Myatt*
(617) 635-9911
Website: www.boston.k12.ma.us/schools/rc646.asp

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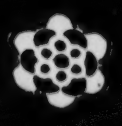

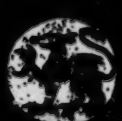

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